

ISSANJI - ONE MOUNTAIN TEMPLE  
Hartford Street Zen Center

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57 Hartford Street, San Francisco, California, 94114.  
(415) 863-2507  
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----- SUMMER 1994 -----

HSZC is a neighborhood Zen temple. It is also called Issanji, (One Mountain Temple) after its founder Issan Dorsey Roshi. The center was started in 1980 and has been offering a regular sitting and practice schedule since then. Issanji is open to people of all orientations and affiliations as a place to meditate and practice together.

In residence is Abbot Zenshin Philip Whalen who takes care of the practice and teaching. Zenshin is available for Dokusan (practice interviews) to answer questions and discuss student's practice. Please make appointments in advance.

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**Quote from Issan:**

"Since coming to Hartford Street, the more I open up, the more problems I have, but it's not something you fix. The more I practice, the more I am aware of suffering, but that is the joy of life. It can be very painful to practice because you're aware of more angles and sharp edges in life and there's no escaping it." (newsletter July-Sept. 1989).

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**HSZC BOARD NEWS**

The Spring 1993 Newsletter discussed the incorporation of Maitri Hospice as a non-profit public benefit corporation separate from HSZC. The separation was primarily motivated by an opportunity for Maitri to obtain a Federal grant that would not be available to a religious corporation.

It is hoped that the new legal structure will allow HSZC and Maitri to mature in ways that reflect their unique activities. As the sole member of the Maitri Corporation, HSZC continues to have some responsibility for its well-being. For example, HSZC appoints the Maitri Board of Directors and approves Maitri's budgets, real estate transactions, and any substantial disposition of assets.

Among the challenges and opportunities presented by the separation will be financial ones. Each corporation is responsible for its own financial management and will direct separate fundraising activities.

If you would like to help support HSZC, you are invited to send contributions to HSZC at 57 Hartford Street. Supporters of the Hospice may send contributions to Maitri Hospice at 61 Hartford Street.

-Brit Pyland

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**HSZC SANGA NEWS**

One unique characteristic of our sangha is that it is predominately a lay practice, rather than a practice and training center for those who want to be priests. The downside of this is that we have to cut back on more formal zen rituals like the monthly Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony since there is no full time priest to assist Zenshin.

Zendo attendance patterns are interesting- for some reason, Monday and Friday evening zazen have full house attendance, while the morning zazen continues to be sparse, with only two to three regulars. Perhaps another reflection of the pre and post weekend syndromes of a lay practice sangha.

HSZC has 15 active members. And a colorful assortment of casual drop-ins that change weekly and monthly.

We have to make a serious effort to encourage people to become contributing members of HSZC as we are currently running a monthly deficit.

Two sangha members, Patrick Glennon and Jack Goldberg, sat a five day sesshin in April at the Page Street Zen center. Patrick says it was a

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rigorous but rewarding experience.

The HSZC board meets the second Monday each month, feel free to attend if you are interested. Our new Board was elected at the annual membership meeting in May. They are: Jennifer Birkett, David Bullock, Peter Camarda, Ananda Dalenberg, Perri Frankoviak (assistant secretary), Marty Kidwell (treasurer), Brit Pyland (secretary), Jerome Petersen (president), and Ron Wickliffe. Zenshin as abbot is an ex-officio member of the board.

There is an ongoing need for volunteers for the zendo activities, such as cleaning, doan, and incense carrying.

The front garden is in the process of being redone with a donation of money and energy from sangha members. The purchase of the large rock put us over our original budget of \$400. With only a few more plants to buy, several small donations of \$10 or \$20 would help us complete the job. Please talk to David Bullock so that any donations can be specifically earmarked for the garden.

#### MAITRI HOSPICE NEWS

When Will Sprietsma stepped down as Acting Director in January, Maitri Hospice was without formal leadership. In May George Hurd was hired as Director. Before that Maura Singer-Williams was performing the over full load of program director, handling admissions, maintaining waiting list, house manager, and some of the financial arrangements. She acts as liason between the Visiting Nurses and Hospice of San Francisco personnel and hospice clients.

The Hospice has 30 volunteers right now. CaroLee Waidlelich is the Volunteer Coordinator. At present there are seven men in the Hospice. One room is currently vacant for painting.

Since JD Kobezak, the original Hospice client in 1987, Maitri has provided non-institutional care to 160 terminally ill people with AIDS. The current average is about 50 a year.

Recent hospice residents we remember in particular. ARTHUR FISHER lived in the Hospice for two years then April 1st he moved out to live with a friend. He sometimes drops by to visit. Maura talks fondly of Arthur,

"...a psychic, radical catholic priest, into healing and energy work. He has a pattern of getting sick then doing a miraculous recovery."

BILL ELWELL died February 6, after being at Maitri for over two years. Bill came in very ill, got better and maintained a plateau. Bill was often seen out tending the garden.

LUKE SCIFO was here 8 months before his death. He was a tanka painter and stained glass maker. He was a student of Lama Lodro. While Luke was dying, students of Lama Lodro came every day and night to do puja.

#### ONE MOUNTAIN IN A NUTSHELL.

A brief history of Issanji/Hartford Street Zen Center.

This article is not meant to be a comprehensive history of Issanji. It is the outgrowth of a perusal of old newsletters and chats with sangha members of long standing.

Most everyone, with the possible exception of some of our newer members, knows that the practice place at 57 Hartford Street began in 1980 with a few gay men who were interested in Buddhism. The first meeting took place at Gay Rap, an informal weekly forum, and attracted about 25 men from differing Buddhist disciplines including Issan Dorsey and others from the San Francisco Zen Center.

Two of the members of what was initially called the Gay Buddhist Club lived at 57 Hartford St. and opened their home to the group for weekly meetings. The building had previously been used as a shrine room and residence for the San Francisco Dharmadhatu from 1973-79, under the direction of the Vajradhara Chogyam Trungpa. As lesbians began to attend the name was changed to Maitri, A Buddhist Association of Gay Men, Lesbians and Friends. The word Maitri in Sanskrit means unconditional friendliness.

Zentatsu Baker-roshi and Robert Aitkin-roshi were early supporters of Maitri and continued their encouragement as did Allen Ginsberg and others from various Buddhist communities in the form of weekly lectures. The group continued like this for about a year and a half until several of the zen students in the membership, with a desire for a more structured practice met to discuss that possibility.



During a succession of meetings Issan became the spiritual advisor of the group. Zafus, a buddha image and bells, etc. were borrowed from the San Francisco Zen Center and friends and a zendo was set up in the basement. On December 8, 1981, Buddha's Enlightenment day in the Zen tradition, the Hartford Street Center formally came into being.

In 1984 HSZC's first real hurdle came when a complicated partnership of sangha members was formed to purchase the building which had been on the market for several months. Suddenly there wasn't only incense and candles to buy, but a monthly mortgage and the maintenance of an old building to deal with too. We managed with the generous support of our members and friends and a lot of hard work. It was also about this time that AIDS appeared on the horizon. We didn't know what our involvement with the burgeoning epidemic would be but several sangha members felt a strong need to become engaged in some fashion.

In the fall of 1984 HSZC held its first practice period under the direction of visiting teacher Baker roshi. Tensho David Schneider held the position of Shusho, acting head monk. A practice period is one of the events that establishes a temple. Although the schedule was not nearly as intense as it is in a monastery and the participants numbered only about 10, there was a sense of deep engagement with the Dharma.

Late in 1986 Issan, who had been studying with Baker roshi in New Mexico, returned to HSZC to take his place as our resident priest. HSZC's growth to this point was gradual but with an increasingly busy schedule of lectures, classes, seminars, one day sittings and ceremonies. There were also more funerals and memorial services than ever before due to deaths from AIDS. With Issan's arrival things seemed to become even busier.

JD Kobezak, a sangha member with AIDS had been living at the center since 1987. In November of 1988 Issan gave the lay precepts to JD in our first Jukai ceremony. Also at that time Kijun Steve Allen and Angelique Farrow, long time friends of Issan, moved in to help with the initial phase of creating an AIDS hospice. The idea of a hospice grew directly out of

our caring for JD. The name Maitri for the hospice seemed appropriate given its meaning and our previous use of the term.

1989 was also a busy year. In January Zenshin Philip Whalen-sensei moved in. Zenshin is, along with Issan, a Dharma heir of their teacher Baker-roshi. Zenshin had been giving lectures and leading classes and one day sittings during his previous visits to HSZC.

March saw the death of Michael Merrill, one of HSZC's founding members. In May we had a benefit auction for Maitri. In late 1989, Robert Breckenridge, a friend of HSZC bought the property next door at 61 Hartford Street and agreed to lease it to us to expand the hospice.

The year drew to a close with the installation of Issan as the Abbot of HSZC. This ascension of the Mountain Seat was simultaneous with the naming of the temple, Issanji, One Mountain Temple. The occasion was a momentous one with spontaneous tears and laughter from the many members, friends and well-wishers attending.

One of Issan's first functions in his new role as abbot was to give jukai in December to: David Senseri, Niki Rothman, Celeste West, Les Harmon, Peter Goetz, Dana Huntington and Ted Petrella. Unfortunately the year ended with the death of JD on New Year's Eve.

The following year in February was Issanji's first takido/priest ordination. Angelique Farrow, Paul Higley, and David Bullock had their heads shaved and were given new names, robes and bowls as children of Buddha. Issan's health was not good at this time. He had been diagnosed with AIDS related lymphoma. He became weaker and less active as the months went by and in June expressed his wish to the temple Board of Directors that Kijun Steve Allen succeed him as abbot. We had planned a second fall practice period to be led by Zenshin as well as tokido for David Senseri and Harper Leah but with Issan's rapidly failing health these events were not to be.

Issan finally died on September 6th, around midnight with fellow monks Kijun Steve Allen, and Shunko Jambvold nearby. As is traditional we sat with the body for three days and during this time many old friends came by to



join us. The funeral had to be held at the SF Zen Center because we expected a large crowd. The huge volume of people that turned out came as no surprise to anyone who knew Issan. He had touched the lives of many people with his compassionate heart. The service was conducted by Baker roshi assisted by Zen center's abbots Tenshin Anderson-sensei and Sojun Weitsman-sensei.

-David Bullock.

continued in next issue.

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#### HSZC SCHEDULE

##### MORNING:

Monday through Saturday:

Zazen - 5:00 to 5:40am;  
Kinhin - 5:40 to 5:50am;  
Zazen - 5:50 to 6:30 am.  
Service.

##### EVENING:

Monday through Friday:

Zazen - 6:00 to 6:40pm.  
Service.

ZENDO PROTOCOL - Arrive 5 minutes before zazen. Bow as you enter the sitting area and when crossing in front of the altar. Once seated and the bell has rung be as still as possible.

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SATURDAY - Informal zazen 9:10 to 10 am; Dharma talk 10am. Tea and discussion. Donation appreciated.

MONDAY - Introduction to zazen and zendo. Please call first. 5:30pm.

DINNER is open to the public Monday evening after zazen. \$5 donation

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#### HSZC MONTHLY SCHEDULE

DHARMA TALK - First Tuesday evening each month. Guest lecturer on variety of Buddhist topics. See bulletin board by zendo entrance for details.

MEMORIAL SERVICE for Temple Founder, Issan Dorsey Roshi. 6th day of each month.

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#### OTHER GROUPS MEETING AT ISSANJI:

DHARMA SISTER'S WOMEN'S SITTING GROUP - 7:20 to 8:00 pm alternating Tuesday and Wednesday. Call 415 -826-7990.

GAY BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP: Hosts HIV+ practice/discussion group. Call 415-974-9878 for info.

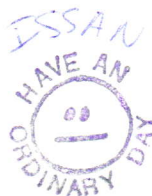
SF MINDFULNESS COMMUNITY - Students of Thich Nhat Hahn. 2nd and 4th Sunday, 9:30 - 12:30. Meditation, discussion. 1st and 3rd Monday 7:00 to 9pm.- Tapes. Meditation. Info. Barbara di Pietro 415-864-2449.

## HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

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